A Guide book

For

Learning Area Coordinators (LACs)

Agahi School System Mansehra

Written
By
Mahmood Ghaznavi
Education Consultant

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The National Standards for Subject Leaders (1998) of the Teacher Training Agency (TTA) played a fundamental role and provided most of the substance of this guidebook. I acknowledge its role and am thankful to the TTA for its valuable contribution in designing this guidebook.

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Background

The greatest challenge for Pakistan, today, is to improve the education both qualitatively and quantitatively, making it at par with the international standards. In 1997, an NGO named Agahi (meaning awareness) was established to help meet this challenge. Since its inception, the Agahi has established five community-based schools in rural villages of Mansehra with the help of donors.

At one hand Agahi is expanding its services through establishing new schools, at the other hand it strives to improve the quality of education in its schools by providing capacity building programs and taking various initiatives. In the year 2007, the Agahi school system started a comprehensive school development initiative focusing on the curriculum, pedagogical practices, teacher development procedures and other academic programs.

To support the initiatives some structural changes were made in the existing set up of the schools. The creation of the position of Learning Area Coordinators (LACs) was one of such structural changes. The system has assigned leadership and mentoring roles to the LACs to implement the initiatives. The LAC of each subject area is expected to act as a catalyst to energize the process of learning by model teaching, helping other teachers and developing programs for the relevant subject.

This guidebook is designed for the LACs of different subjects which aims at providing basic know-how to LACs about their position and explaining their Terms of Reference (ToR). The ToR is, however, tentative and could be modified, changed and/or

refined as and when needed. Furthermore, the roles and responsibilities specified in this guidebook are not exclusive.

Core Purpose of Learning Area Coordinators

"To provide professional leadership and management for a subject, to secure high quality teaching, effective use of resources and improved standards of learning and achievement for all pupils." (National Standards for Subject Leaders originally produced by the Teacher Training Agency in 1998 and further refined by the DfES in 2001).

A LAC provides leadership and direction for the subject and ensures that is managed and organized to meet the aims and objectives of the school system. While the academic team and head teacher carry overall responsibility for school improvement, a LAC has responsibility for securing high standards of teaching and learning in their subject as well as playing a major role in the development of school policy and practice.

A LAC plays a key role in supporting, guiding and motivating teachers of the subject, and other community members. LACs evaluate the effectiveness of teaching and learning, the subject curriculum and progress towards targets for pupils and staff, to inform future priorities and targets for the subject. A LAC identifies needs in their own subject and recognizes that these must be considered in relation to the overall needs of the school. A LAC needs to have an understanding of how their subject contributes to school priorities and to the overall education and achievement of all pupils.

Key outcomes of Learning Area Coordinators

Learning Area Coordinators provide subject leadership and effective subject leadership is helpful to the various stakeholders in various ways:

a. **Pupils**

Effective subject leadership results improvement in the knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes of pupils. They better understand the ideas and concepts appropriate to their age and level. They become more skillful and are able to apply their knowledge and skills in various activities. They become enthusiastic, well prepared for any test and examination in the subject and show positive attitude and behavior towards the subject.

b. **Teachers**

Effective subject leadership builds collaborative teams of teachers. Teachers better understand the subject aims and understand how to relate the subject aims to the school's aims. Teachers freely exchange expertise and experiences and never hesitate to share challenges. Teachers feel relaxed, become enthusiastic, and set high expectations for pupils, which reinforces the motivation of pupils. Teachers make good use of guidance, trainings and support to enhance their knowledge and understanding of the subject and to develop expertise in their teaching, make effective use of subject-specific resources, select appropriate teaching and learning approaches to meet subject-specific learning objectives and the needs of pupils.

c. **Parents**

Effective subject leadership keeps the parents informed about the achievements and areas of improvement of their children. Parents become

aware of the expectations made of their children and know how to support their children's learning in the subject.

d. Head teachers and other senior management

Effective subject leadership keeps the head teacher and senior management informed about the achievement gained in the subject, the priorities set for the subject, the challenges faced in the subject and also provides suggestions for improvement.

e. Community

Effective subject leadership creates strong links with the community and informs the community about the subject-relevant activities and also advises them as how they can support teaching and learning of the subject.

Professional competence of Learning Area Coordinators

The job of LACs is a complex and demanding one. To provide an effective subject leadership a LAC needs to possess knowledge, skills and attributes. An LAC should possess knowledge and understanding specific to the subject and also generic to the leadership role. An LAC needs to have leadership, managerial and administrative skills and an ability to blend these skills in a right proportion according to the situation and requirements. Specifically, an LAC is expected to possess the following knowledge, skills and attributes.

1. Professional knowledge and understanding

To be an effective subject leader a LAC should have knowledge and understanding of:

- Their school's aims, priorities, targets and action plans;

- The relationship of the subject to the curriculum as a whole;
- The characteristics of high quality teaching in the subject and the major strategies for improving and sustaining high standards of teaching, learning and achievement for all pupils;
- How to develop pupils' literacy, numeracy, and information technology skills through the subject;
- How teaching the subject can promote pupils' religious, spiritual, moral, social, cultural, mental and physical development;
- How teaching the subject can help to prepare pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life;
- The role of school governance and how it can contribute to the work of the LAC;
- Health and safety requirements, including where to obtain expert advice.

2. **Skills**

An LAC is expected to have different skills to properly apply and materialize her knowledge and understanding for better pupils' achievements. Some of the basic skills expected from the LACs are as follow:

a. Leadership skills

The following leadership skills are expected of LACs.

- Commitment to a clear aim and direction for the subject;
- Prioritize, plan and organize;
- Work as part of a team;
- Be sensitive to cultural, religious and gender issues;

- Properly acknowledge and utilize the experience, expertise and contribution of others;
- Devolve responsibilities and delegate tasks appropriately
- Seek and advice and support when necessary
- Make informed use of trainings and good practices
- Apply good practice to and from other subjects and areas.

b. Decision-making skills

LACs should be able to:

- Judge when to take decisions, when to consult others and when to defer to the head teacher or senior management;
- Understand, analyze and interpret relevant information and data;
- Think creatively and imaginatively to anticipate and solve problems and identify opportunities.

c. Communication skills

LACs should be able to:

- Communicate effectively with others, orally and in writing;
- Negotiate and consult effectively;
- Understand the views of others
- Chair meetings effectively

d. **Self-management skills**

LACs should be able to:

- Prioritize and manage their own time effectively;

- Strike a balance between various demands such as teaching, subject management and school development
- Achieve challenging professional goals;
- Take responsibility for their own professional development.

3. Attributes

An LAC needs to possess and display attributes necessary for effective teaching, leadership and management such as:

- Adaptability to changing circumstances and new ideas;
- Energy, vigour and perseverance;
- Self-confidence
- Enthusiasm
- Intellectual ability
- Reliability and integrity
- Commitment and devotion
- Ability to work under stress
- Fair mindedness and open mindedness
- Critical spirit

Key areas of subject leadership

An LAC provides subject leadership working closely with the head teacher and senior management team in each of the following key areas and liaises with other colleagues appropriately. The four key areas of subject leadership are:

a. Strategic direction and development of the subject
b. Teaching and learning

c. Leading and managing staff

d. Efficient and effective deployment of staff and resources

To fulfill the needs of the above-mentioned key areas the LAC of a particular area is expected to perform the following roles and responsibilities:

1. **Classroom teacher:** LAC of a particular area is expected to be an exemplary classroom teacher. All other teachers of the area will take her as a role model. As a classroom teacher she will do all the activities required to deliver an effective lesson namely;
   - planning lessons
   - designing activities for lessons
   - collecting relevant resources for their lessons
   - designing assessment tools for lessons
   - writing reflections on the effectiveness of lessons and maintaining reflective journals
   - constantly striving and identifying ways for making teaching effective.
2. **Mentor teacher:** LAC of a particular area is expected to be a mentor teacher of the area. As a mentor teacher she has to perform various activities for the professional development of teachers of her subject area such as;
   - delivering model lessons
   - facilitating teachers in planning lessons
   - co-planning and co-teaching
   - observing teachers while teaching and giving constructive feedback
   - helping teachers in collecting activities and resources for teaching

- helping teachers in developing examination papers
- conducting workshops and carrying out other professional development activities for teachers
- any kind of help and support on when and as needed basis

3. **Program developer:** LACs are expected to develop learning programs specific to their area in order to facilitate the students to achieve the set learning standards. Specifically LACs are expected to set targets and develop;
   - learning activities
   - teaching materials
   - assessment tools

   to achieve the set targets.

4. **Member of school's academic management team:** A LAC is expected to be a key member of the School's Academic Management Team. Along with the head of the school and other LACs she is responsible to manage the academic activities of the school. A LAC is expected to perform the following managerial roles and responsibilities:

   a. appointing new teachers
   b. carrying out annual staff appraisal
   c. carrying out admission tests
   d. keeping records
   e. organizing co-curricular activities
   f. arranging parent teacher meetings
   g. co-coordinating with the senior management and other staff of the school

h. maintaing high level of discipline and order in their respective subject area

i. helping the senior management for the overall discipline of the school

5. **A motivated learner:** A LAC is expected to be a motivated learner in order to enhance her knowledge through various means such as:

a. participating in the professional development activities organized by the school, school system or any other educational organization

b. writing educational articles

c. carrying out small scale educational research

Specific Terms of References (TOR) Of LACs

Learning Area Coordinators will be responsible for the following roles and responsibilities;

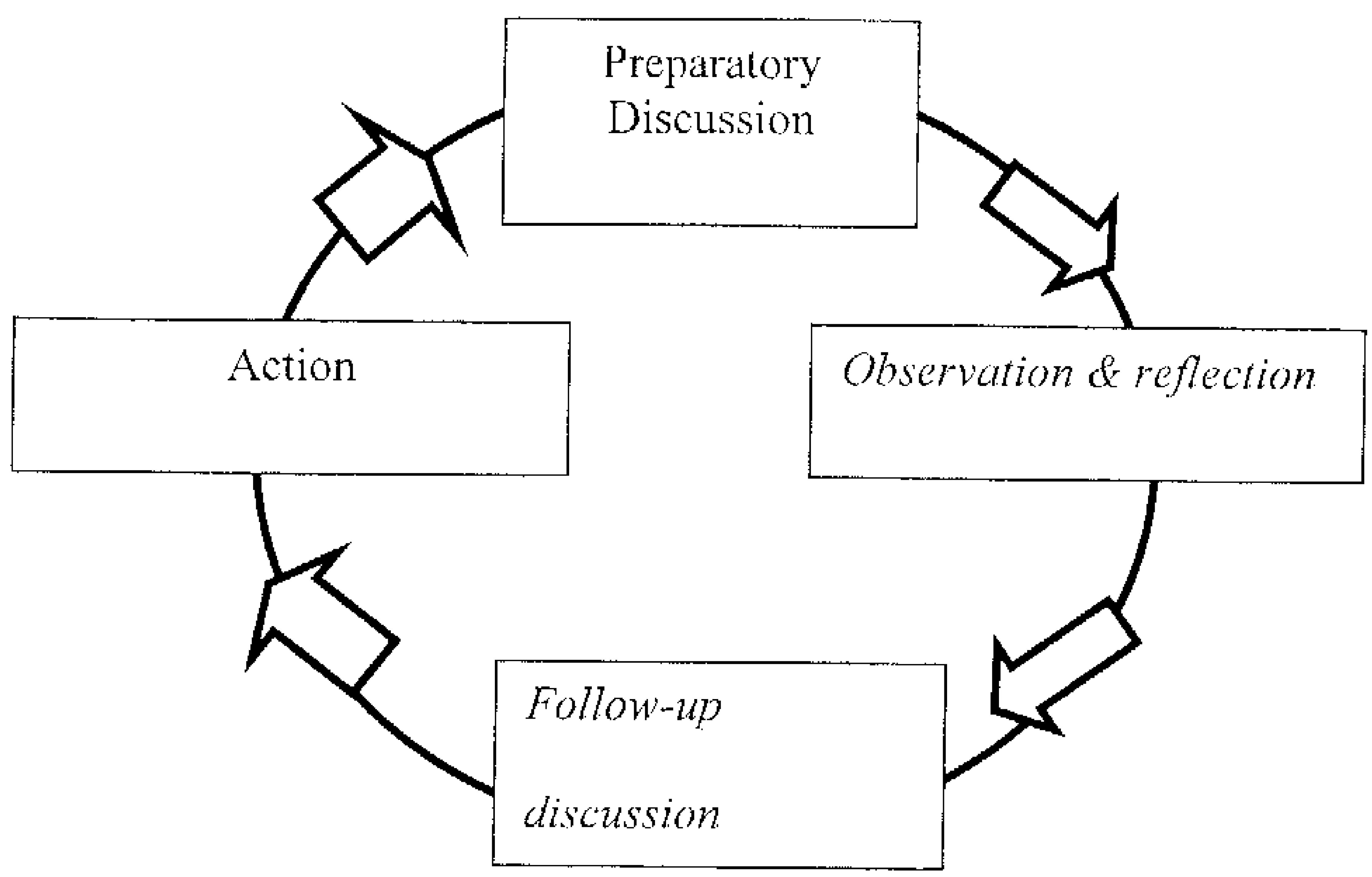
- modifying and enriching the lesson plans of their respective areas with the help of teachers of the particular area
- collection and making teaching/learning resources according to the subject areas
- leading specific subject teachers in making assessment plan, identifying area of assessment, designing assessment tools, making sure assessment by using multiple ways, marking of assessment has been done neatly and properly
- collecting assessment reports of children from their respective teachers keeping a systematic record and submitting to school heads
- constantly striving and identifying ways for making teaching effective.
- delivering model lessons for the teachers of the specific area

- co-teaching with the teachers of the specific areas to develop the teaching skills
- observing teachers while teaching and giving constructive feedback
- conducting workshops and carrying out other professional development activities for the teachers of the specific area and becoming available for them for any support during the school time
- assisting school administration in identifying and appointing new teachers
- assisting school administration in carrying out appraisal of teachers of specific subject areas
- designing and conducting annual entry tests
- organizing co-curricular activities related to their subject areas
- co-coordinating with the mentor, head teacher and senior management regarding subject related matters

SOME PRACTICAL GUIDELINES FOR LACs

1. Doing classroom observations:

- Preparatory discussion
- Observation
- Follow-up discussion and feedback leading to agreement on action



Preparatory discussion for classroom observation should:

- clarify the purpose of the observation;
- set mutually convenient dates for both the observation and the follow-up discussion and feedback;
- identify the general aim of the follow-up discussion;
- establish the specific aim of the observation;
- clarify the observer's actions during and after the class; and identify how observation will be recorded

2. Feedback

Basic Guidelines for Giving Feedback

1. Clarity -- Be clear about what you want to say.

2. Emphasize the positive -- This isn't being collusive in the person's dilemma.

3. Be specific -- Avoid general comments and clarify pronouns such as "it," "that," etc.

4. Focus on behavior rather than the person.

5. Refer to behavior that can be changed.

6. Be descriptive rather than evaluative.

7. Own the feedback -- Use 'I' statements.

8. Generalizations -- Notice "all," "never," "always," etc., and ask to get more specificity -- often these words are arbitrary limits on behavior.

9. Be very careful with advice -- People rarely struggle with an issue because of the lack of some specific piece of information; often, the best help is helping the person to come to a better understanding of their issue, how it developed, and how they can identify actions to address the issue more effectively.

10. Always Get Feedback on Your Feedback--Find out whether the feedback you're providing is working for them. If it's not, what's the point?

3. Routine guidelines for LACs

- Be on time.
- Be honest and respectful.
- Always call the teacher by the assigned time if you have to change your plans so the teacher will know what to expect
- Give your teacher advanced notice if you have to miss a regular visit for vacation.
- Encourage the teacher to suggest activities and help plan them.
- Give your teacher your full attention when you are together.
- Be consistent and clear with your expectations. In new situations, be patient if you have not explained the limits ahead of time.
- Allow and encourage your teacher to be open about his/her thoughts, feelings and values…but don't pry. Respect the teacher's opinion…don't discount it as foolish.
- Be aware that your actions, thoughts and words may be picked up by your mentee even if that is not your intention.
- Value diversity--chances are that your mentee will be different from you in fundamental ways. Remember that you can learn from him/her just as he/she learns from you.
- Set a positive example by obeying laws and school rules.
- Do not be drawn into family conflicts. The parent-child relationship is "family business" and you should not be involved beyond listening to the mentee's feelings.
- Help your mentee make decisions and formulate their own conclusions without telling him/her what to do. Explore alternative solutions together.
- Never make promises you can't keep.
- Let your mentee know that you like him/her through words of praise and encouragement.
- Give the relationship time to develop. Don't judge it too quickly!!
- Talk to your teacher/mentee if you are ever confused or concerned about anything in your match--no matter how insignificant it may seem. "Insignificant" things tend to blossom into larger issues if not properly addressed.

4. Communication with teachers

We expect our LACs to avoid using the following way of communication with their teachers of respected areas

- **Moralizing, Preaching, Obliging**

"You should..." "You ought to..." "It's your duty to..."
*These messages induce guilt, reduce self-esteem and build general resistance to authority (including you!!).

- **Persuading with Logic, Arguing, Instructing, Lecturing**

"Do you realize..." "Here is why you are wrong..." "The fact is..."
*These invite counter arguments, increase defensiveness, reduce openness and belittle the opinion against which you are arguing.

- **Advising, Recommending, Providing Answers or Solutions**

"What I would do is..." "Why don't you..." "It would be best for you..."
*Statements like these imply superiority, deprive the receiver of the esteem-building experience of solving their own problem and may encourage dependency.

- **Criticizing, Blaming, Judging Negatively, Disapproving**

"You are lazy..." "You aren't thinking straight." "You are really mixed up..."
*These statements instantly lower self-esteem, induce guilt, reduce openness and arouse resentment.

- **Kidding, teasing, joking, using sarcasm**

"You think that you know it all." "Were you just born yesterday?"
"Get up on the wrong side of the bed this morning?"
*These messages may arouse feelings of rejection and resentment.

5. Time and task management

Effective time management is a prime requisite of LACs. This sequence of four steps may help them in utilizing their time effectively.

An Example:

Kohsaar Academy
Learning Area Coordinator (LAC)

Weekly Planning Format
Date 03/08/2007 **Name of LAC**, Miss Naila _**Subject** English

S#	Period 1	Period 2	Period 3	Period 4	Break	Period 5	Period 6	Period 7
Mo..	May be your Own Period Ask any teacher of your area to observe your lesson if she is free	Co-Teaching with teacher A but putting more responsibilities on the class teacher	Observation teacher B But with pre discussion that which area you will focus in observation then give written feedback	Checking children work Class X, such as copies. worksheet This can be done taking copies and worksheets randomly from children, At least 6, 2 good, 2 average 2 week After checking write feedback to the respective teacher		May be your Own period Ask any teacher of your area to observe your lesson if she is free	Adding and modifying some lesson plan with any free teacher available	Open Decide your own task what you have to do
Feedback/report								

Tuesday	Demo lesson Take any teacher lesson	Observation teacher C But with pre discussion that which area you will focus in observation then give written feedback	Checking children work Class Y, such as copies, worksheet This can be done taking copies and worksheets randomly from children At least 6, 2 good. 2 average 2 week After checking write feedback to the respective teacher	May be your Own period Ask any teacher of your area to observe your lesson if she is free		Open Decide your own task what you have to do	Project Designing for any class involving subject teacher	Feedback session for observed teacher
Feedback/report								
Wednesday	Teaching and learning materials Collection And development of relevant low cost and no cost material	May be your Own period Ask any teacher of your area to observe your lesson if she is free	Checking children work Class Y, Such as copies, worksheet This can be done taking copies and worksheets randomly from children At least 6, 2 good, 2 average 2 weak. After checking write feedback to the respective teacher	Open Decide your own task what you have to do		Utilization of Library and computer You may take your teacher to library and computer lab to make familiarize and with available resources and possible use of them	Project Designing for any class involving subject teacher	May be your Own period Ask any teacher of your area to observe your lesson if she is free
Feedback/report								

Thursday	May be your Own period · Ask any teacher of your area to observe your lesson if she is free	Observation teacher B But with pre discussion that which area you will focus in observation then give written feedback	Co-Teaching with teacher A but putting more responsibilities on the class teacher	Project Designing for any class involving subject teacher	**Break**	May be your Own period Ask any teacher of your area to observe your lesson if she is free	Open Decide your own task what you have to do	Utilization of Library and computer You may take your teacher to library and computer lab to make familiarize and with available resources and possible use of them
Feedback/ report								
Friday	May be your Own period Ask any teacher of your area to observe your lesson if she is free	Open Decide your own task what you have to do	Checking children work Class Y, Such as copies, worksheet This can be done taking copies and worksheets randomly from children At least 6, 2 good, 2 average 2 weak. After checking write feedback to the respective teacher	Checking children work Class Y, Such as copies, worksheet This can be done taking copies and worksheets randomly from children At least 6, 2 good, 2 average 2 weak. After checking write feedback to the respective teacher	**Break**	Submission of last week report and next week activities	May be your Own period Ask any teacher of your area to observe your lesson if she is free	Weekly meeting with your respected teachers and reflecting and planning next week activities
Feedback/report								

Plan checked and approved by ______________________________

Important Note- The above activities are just suggested activities. According to nature of task will be changed as TOR lists. Such as during term assessment time, or any other event, activities will change. However, we strongly recommend to carry on the above activates as daily work.

The End